



# INTRODUCTION & GENERAL GUIDELINES

## SISTER SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS

Idaho Department Of Education

International Education Task Force

### DEFINITION:

A sister school relationship is the development of a positive association between two countries through the establishment of links between schools and school communities.

The opportunity to participate in a sister school relationship is open to any school with a desire to learn more about the language and culture of other countries. The Idaho Department of Education's International Education Task Force will determine final selection for school partnerships. Sister school relationships will be established under a Memorandum of Understanding.

Dr. Dan Prinzing, International Education Coordinator

[dlprinzing@sde.idaho.gov](mailto:dlprinzing@sde.idaho.gov)

## AIM OF SISTER SCHOOLS:

- To strengthen the relationship between Idaho and countries abroad;
- To broaden the knowledge and understanding of students by enabling them to gain an understanding of and appreciation and respect for other cultures;
- To develop ties of friendship through ongoing communication;
- To develop opportunities for teachers to exchange course material, information on teaching methods and best practices and all other matters relating to classroom instruction;
- To provide opportunities for contact and interaction with the wider school community;
- To promote Idaho education abroad; and
- To facilitate visits of students and teachers to the sister school.

## BENEFITS TO TEACHERS:

- Knowledge and practices of a foreign educational system;
- Professional development through the exchange of ideas and materials;
- Broader educational horizons by adding a global perspective; and
- Improved proficiency in international education through the study of language, history, economics, government, geography and culture.

## BENEFITS TO STUDENTS:

- Knowledge and practices of a foreign country and culture;
- Access to new ideas and experiences by working closely with teachers and students in a foreign educational system;
- Opportunities for cooperative communication;
- Broadened understanding, acceptance and tolerance of other cultures.



## SCHOOLS SEEKING A SISTER SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP

Application of Interest forms are available from  
Dr. Dan Prinzing, International Education Coordinator  
Idaho Department of Education  
P.O. Box 83720, Boise, ID 83720-0027  
(208)-332-6974

- Form signed by the building principal is to be returned to Dr. Dan Prinzing, Coordinator, International Education, Idaho Department of Education, P.O. Box 83720, Boise, ID 83720-0027.
- If informal discussions have already commenced with a school abroad, the Idaho Department of Education will advise the country's Secretariat, Ministry, or Department of Education.
- Once a partnership has been established, it is suggested that the principal or designee of the Idaho school write a letter of introduction that includes a package of information to acquaint the school abroad with its sister school.
- After initial contact has been made, the two schools will sign a mutually agreeable contract. A sample agreement is attached.
- For the purpose of maintaining the state's Sister School Registry, it is requested that schools provide the Department of Education a copy of the agreement. This registry is used to assist other schools wishing to establish a sister school relationship in a specific country and provides information on activities, visits or promotions which may be of interest to schools.

## SISTER SCHOOL AGREEMENTS ARISING FROM MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Sister school programs under a Memorandum of Understanding will be advertised by the Idaho Department of Education. Application forms will be sent to those schools expressing interest. The International Education Task Force will review the goals, objectives and accountability measures on the application form and will select promising schools.

## STUDENT EXCHANGES ARISING FROM SISTER SCHOOL AGREEMENTS

Student exchanges should operate under conditions that have been mutually agreed upon by both schools. Participating schools should ensure that reciprocity of student exchanges is maintained.

### *1. Prior to the Exchange*

Exchanges require careful planning and could take up to twelve months to arrange. It is important that a rapport is established between students in both schools through regular communication before the exchange takes place. This could occur across the curriculum; for example, in geography students might exchange maps and local geographical information. In music, videos, audiotapes or posters could be exchanged.

The schools will be involved in the regular exchange of information. Topics should be selected according to student interest and the opportunity for curriculum enrichment. Captured in a permanent display in the school, the exchange can include copies of the sister school's agreement written in both English and the language of the sister school. Information may also be posted on the school's web site. Schools may consider communicating through the Internet system that provides a more immediate form of contact for students.

### *2. Idaho students traveling abroad under a sister school agreement.*

Students on a cultural exchange should obtain a visitor's visa and may attend school under the supervision of an exchange program approved by the Council on Standards for International Education Travel (CSIET). Students must travel on United States passports. Health requirements vary from country to country. The Health Department can advise you of the requirements for each country. It is highly recommended that students receive all the necessary immunizations. In principle, approval may have already been given by the local education association (LEA) for the exchange of students under a sister school agreement. Specific details of the proposed exchange program must be presented to LEA for its approval. Travel insurance should be considered for all students participating in cultural exchanges under sister school agreements.

3. *Students from abroad visiting Idaho under a sister school agreement.*

Students may attend an Idaho school on visitors' visas if they are participating in intercultural exchanges under the sponsorship of a CSIET approved exchange program. The host school may be responsible for arranging a program and host family accommodations. Organizers may consider providing host families with a briefing session or selecting families that have had experience with foreign students or who speak the visiting student's language.

Further suggestions:

- Students may find it helpful to spend some time communicating with their hosts prior to departure. This assists in developing a bond between the students;
- Official gifts are usually presented to the visiting/hosting school;
- Consideration could be given to approaching the local mayor to host an official welcoming ceremony for the visiting sister school;
- Publicity of the sister school arrangements in both the school newsletter and the local paper could be considered;
- Students will need to prepare for a climate that is often different from that with which they are familiar;
- Awareness of the sister school's holidays and cultural norms is expected;
- Local businesses may be willing to provide financial support upon request to supply guests with school logo items, photography equipment, etc., which could be presented to students from the sister school;
- Both students and teachers involved must be carefully briefed to ensure a successful experience;

- An evaluation of the exchange is essential. If hosting, the school should survey students and families involved. If the school has undertaken a visit to the sister school, students should be asked to reflect upon their experiences.

For more information regarding inbound or outbound exchange programs and the development of district policy to support the inclusion of intercultural exchange, *An Intercultural Education Guide for Idaho Schools – Fostering Global Perspectives through Student and Teacher Exchange* is available online at [www.sde.state.id.us/instruct/international.asp](http://www.sde.state.id.us/instruct/international.asp).

## TEACHER EXCHANGES ARISING FROM SISTER SCHOOL AGREEMENTS

The terms of a teacher exchange should be negotiated between the two schools and operate under mutually agreed conditions.

## ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION TASK FORCE'S SISTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

A sister school relationship can be established under a Memorandum of Understanding through the Idaho Department of Education and the International Education Task Force. The Idaho Department of Education will be the conduit for information, activities, visits, etc., which may be of interest to those schools concerned.

Purpose:

1. Establish terms and conditions and a set of guidelines for schools wishing to be involved.
2. Establish a committee to select schools applying for an advertised sister school relationship and endorse the matching of schools.
3. Establish a line of procedures for negotiating sister schools with each foreign authority.
4. Establish accountability procedures.

### **Schools with Established Sister School Relationships**

In the event that sister school relationships have already been established, it would be beneficial if schools register the existing partnership with the Idaho Department of Education. The registry – published on the SDE website - enables the networking of schools with interests in the same countries for sharing of ideas and resources. These schools would also be able to assist and advise new schools wishing to establish a sister school relationship. Schools with

established links should continue to liaise, operate and report to the Idaho Department of Education as agreed under their individual agreements.

### **Schools Wishing to Establish New Sister School Relationships**

Once a list of schools wishing to establish sister school relationship has been compiled, the Idaho Department of Education will liaise with the relevant consulate or appropriate body, depending on the country, to establish programs for schools and assist in the process. It is advised that the initial contact between the two schools, which have been linked, be made through school principals.

The Idaho Department of Education will provide each consulate, or appropriate body, with a list of all schools with sister school relationships in that country, but will not be responsible for the day-to-day administration of the program. The International Education Task Force will provide advice, information about other schools that have relationships in the same area/region/country, provide guidelines and liaise with the consulates on behalf of schools.

A form will be sent to each school previously on file with the Idaho Department of Education and to any new schools wishing to establish a sister school relationship. This information will assist in establishing the links for schools.

The International Education Task Force will compile a list of schools with existing relationships in the same location to assist new schools in establishing their programs.

Schools will draft their own agreements with the sister school; a sample agreement will be provided to assist schools. This sample would serve as a guide and should not restrict schools from negotiating other programs and activities.

### **Sister School Relationships Arising from a Memorandum of Understanding**

Expressions of interest for sister school relationships from a Memorandum of Understanding will be sought through the Idaho Department of Education. If there is a limited number of sister school relationships to be established, a selection of Idaho schools will be undertaken by a committee from the International Education Task Force.

The Idaho Department of Education, in conjunction with the International Education Task Force, will be responsible for liaison between Idaho schools and the Secretariat, Ministry, or Department of Education concerned. Once a link has been established, initial contact between the schools will be made through the principal. The International Education Task Force will coordinate reporting and review procedures.

The State of Idaho has a number of official sister-city/state links that aim to foster goodwill, cooperation and exchange on a commercial and cultural level. The sister school relationships are another excellent way of enhancing these

relationships, as well as emphasizing educational practices. There is a great deal of potential for students and teachers to become involved in a wide range of activities and programs outside of the educational arena as part of the sister city/state arrangements.

Expressions of interest for sister school relationships will require a completed application form. A sub-committee of the International Education Task Force will determine selection of Idaho schools.

### **Foreign Schools Wishing To Establish Sister School Relationships with Idaho Schools**

If a request is made by a school abroad through the SDE's International Education Task Force and an appropriate Idaho School is not on file, an advertisement will be placed on the Idaho Department of Education's International Education website inviting schools to express interest.

( [www.sde.state.id.us/instruct/international.asp](http://www.sde.state.id.us/instruct/international.asp) )

If a number of Idaho schools so desire the partnership, the International Education Task Force will contact the Secretariat, Ministry or Department of Education, or other appropriate body, to seek assistance with establishing additional partners.



## **SAMPLE SCHOOL AGREEMENT**

(School Name)

- Is prepared to give a commitment to the ongoing development of the sister school relationship over a period of one (1) year.
- Is prepared to provide sufficient resources to establish and maintain the sister school program.
- Will appoint a coordinator with responsibility for the administration of the link, the contact with the International Education Task Force, and the management of the program.
- Will draft a mutual agreement with the sister school, outlining the goals of the program and activities to be undertaken and will forward a copy of this agreement for approval to the International Education Task Force and the Idaho Department of Education.
- Understands that reciprocal student and teacher exchanges could be a part of the sister school agreement.
- Will review the sister school agreement after one (1) year to ensure that the aims of the program have been met.
- Is prepared to share the acquired knowledge, information and skills, as well as assist other schools with the establishment of a sister school relationship.

---

Principal Signature

Please return this to Dr. Dan Prinzing, International Education Coordinator Idaho  
Department of Education, P.O. Box 83720, Boise, ID 83720-0027  
Telephone (208) 332-6974  
Fax (208) 332-6997

(SAMPLE AGREEMENT)

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
Idaho School and School Abroad

Both the Idaho school and school abroad, hereby agree to become sister schools in order to promote friendship and cooperation between our two schools and mutual understanding between Idaho and (country).

**SISTER SCHOOL PROGRAM GOALS**

- To strengthen relationships, understanding and appreciation between the residents of Idaho and the foreign country.
- To deepen the understanding of and respect for each other's cultures.
- To provide opportunities for students and teachers to develop skills which enhance Idaho/foreign country relationships.
- To support the exchange of ideas concerning the United States of America, The State of Idaho and a foreign country.
- To develop ties of friendship through regular communication.

**Sister School Activities**

- The exchanges of information about curriculum, school policy and school events
- The exchange of teaching resources, course materials and teaching strategies
- The exchange of student work, letters, photos, student newspapers, etc., to promote mutual understanding
- The promotion of a student, teacher and administrator exchange program to provide the opportunity to study, work and live in the sister school community
- The support of mutually agreed projects

After one (1) year, the Idaho school and school abroad will assess the progress of the sister school relationship to determine future directions of this agreement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal, Idaho School

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal, School Abroad

\_\_\_\_\_  
SDE International Education Coordinator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Officer for International Affairs

This is only a guide.  
The agreement should include goals and measures that meet the needs and expectations of both schools.